

## Lawyering Skills & Strategies I-5314/ 12466 &12467 - Fall 2026

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Office Hours: Mondays from 12:00 to 1:00 pm and Thursdays from 4:00 to 5:00 pm in 341J

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### 1. Overview and Course Objectives

Welcome to your first semester of law school. In this course – Lawyering Skills & Strategies (LSS), you will learn the basic workings of the American legal system; how to analyze and apply legal sources; and other skills you need to succeed in law school and beyond, with a strong focus on research and writing. To accomplish these goals, you will draft documents; work through legal problems inside and outside the classroom; review texts about effective writing; and engage in simulation exercises. The course objectives for LSS (which is a two-semester course) can be found on the Canvas page for this course.

### 2. Course Page

This class will be managed online via Canvas. To access Canvas, click [here](#), or go to [access.uh.edu](http://access.uh.edu) and click on the Canvas icon. You should be automatically enrolled in this course.

- Your user name is your **CougarNetID@cougarnet.uh.edu**.
- Your password is your **CougarNet password**.

If you have trouble accessing Canvas, click [here](#) for help.

### 3. Textbooks

Our class will use the following texts:

- *Becoming a Legal Writer*, Robin Boyle-Laisure, Christine Coughlin, & Sandy Patrick, (2d Ed., Carolina Academic Press 2025).
- *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* (22nd ed. 2025).
  - **You must purchase a print copy of the Bluebook**, as you will need it for in-class assignments and on the final exam, when you will not have internet access. You will also need the Bluebook for the Spring semester and for summer employment opportunities, so it is best that you buy (rather than rent) the Bluebook. If you want to purchase online access, you may do that too, but the print book is required.
  - **NOTE: DO NOT BUY THE BLUEBOOK ON AMAZON.** Amazon sells many counterfeit copies that will lead you to incorrect citation. You can purchase the Bluebook at the Law Center Bookstore or at <https://www.legalbluebook.com/buy>.

I recommend the following additional materials as optional resources:

- *Manual on Usage & Style* (Texas Law Review 15th ed. 2020), ISBN: 1-878674-59-5. You can purchase the e-book [here](#).
- *The Elements of Style: Simplified and Illustrated for Busy People*, William Strunk, Jr. & Virginia Campbell, available on [Amazon](#).
- *Core Grammar for Lawyers*, available at [www.coregrammarforlawyers.com](http://www.coregrammarforlawyers.com).

#### 4. **Assignments and Grading**

Required reading for each class can be found via the Syllabus on Canvas.

The following assignments constitute the baseline for your grade for this course, subject to adjustments identified in this information sheet:

#### **Graded Assignments**

1. **Research Assessments (first one worth 10%, second one worth 15% of Course Grade)**

You will have two in-class assessments of your research skills gained through the Research Modules. Bring your laptop to class for each of these timed assessments. You will submit your answers anonymously.

2. **Final Memorandum (35% of Course Grade)**

You will research and write a memorandum addressing the issues presented by the file. This memo will be submitted anonymously.

3. **LRW Exam (35% of Course Grade)**

At the end of the semester, you will take a three-hour exam that will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and a longer form answer. The exam will cover skills and concepts from the entire semester. This Exam will be submitted anonymously.

4. **Professionalism and Exercise Completion (5% of Course Grade)**

As future attorneys, I expect you to demonstrate professionalism in this class. This means coming to class and to meetings with me on time and prepared, participating in class discussions, avoiding using Facebook, Twitter, chats and similar programs in class when we are using laptops, making a good faith effort on ungraded assignments, and showing respect for me and other students during class and in any email or other communications. In addition, an important part of your professionalism grade will be timely completion of and *making a good faith effort on* any exercises I ask you to do. Unexcused failure in any regard will result in a loss of professionalism points.

## **Ungraded Assignments**

Throughout the semester, you will receive several research and writing assignments that will not be formally graded. You must make a good faith effort on these assignments and complete them on time. If you fail to do either of these things, you may receive a grade penalty or receive an incomplete for the class.

## **Formatting Requirements:**

Unless instructed otherwise, all assignments must conform to these specifications:

- Use Times New Roman, 12-point type, on white letter-size paper.
- Double-space each assignment, except for headings.
- Use one-inch margins on all sides.
- Place page numbers in the bottom center of each page.
- Adhere to any other instructions provided for an assignment, including file type and file names.

## **Deadlines:**

If a graded assignment is not turned in by the deadline, I may deduct 10% of your total points during each hour that your assignment is late, starting with the first hour. So, if your assignment is due at 10 am on a given day, I may deduct 10% if you submit it at 10:05 am on the due date, 20% if you submit it at 11:05 am, etc. If you are unable to complete a graded assignment by the deadline, you must contact me *before* the due date to seek an extension.

UHLC uses an anonymous grading system to ensure fairness in grading. Your name should not appear anywhere on the graded assignments. You should not give me your exam number, and you should take care to avoid providing information on graded assignments that may identify you. I reserve the right to deduct points from a graded assignment if you fail to abide by instructions that are intended to safeguard anonymity, including those regarding extension requests.

## **Curve and Grade Distribution:**

This course is subject to a mandatory grading curve. The average grade in each section must be between 3.2 and 3.4.

The course is also subject to the mandatory First Year Grade Distribution:

- A or A-: 5% to 30%
- B+ or B or B-: 50% to 90%
- C+ or below: 5% to 20%

## **5. Class Meetings**

This class will meet in person, face-to-face in the rooms assigned by the Law Center.

- **Section A2** is scheduled to meet on Mondays from 1 – 2:30 pm **in Room 102B**, and Thursdays from 2:30 pm – 4:00 pm **in Room 213**.
- **Section C3** is scheduled to meet on Mondays from 1 – 2:30 pm **in Room 102B**, and on Thursdays from 10:30 am – 12:00 pm **in Room 220**.

I will take attendance during each class session, conference, and small group meeting, and I reserve the right to count you as absent if you are not present ten minutes after the class or conference has begun. If you cannot attend a class meeting, it is your responsibility to contact me in advance of the class (barring an emergency that prevents you from doing so). ***Under UHLC's attendance policy, you may miss no more than 20% of scheduled class sessions during the semester.*** If you exceed this percentage, I will notify the Dean for Student Services, which could result in your dismissal from the class.

## **6. Laptops and Electronic Devices**

We will regularly use laptops for in-class exercises, so please bring a laptop to every class. However, the PowerPoints from each class will be posted to Canvas, so your notetaking can be minimized.

Consistent with UHLC's computer use policy, improper use of a computer during class (including, but not limited to, composing, sending, or reading emails; instant messaging; searching or browsing the Internet; playing games; and/or viewing movies) may result in dismissal from the class session or a reduction in your final grade. Unless you are instructed otherwise, please turn off cell phones and similar devices. See <http://www.law.uh.edu/jd/current/handbook.pdf>

The University of Houston is committed to student success and provides information to optimize the online learning experience through our [Power-On](#) website. Please visit this website for a comprehensive set of resources, tools, and tips including obtaining access to the internet, AccessUH, and Blackboard; requesting a laptop through the Laptop Loaner Program; using your smartphone as a webcam; and downloading Microsoft Office 365 at no cost. For questions or assistance contact [UHOnline@uh.edu](mailto:UHOnline@uh.edu).

Please check and use your CougarNet email for communications related to this course. Faculty use the CougarNet email to respond to course-related inquiries such as grade queries or progress reports for reasons of FERPA. To access your CougarNet email, login to your Microsoft 365 account with your CougarNet credentials. Visit University Information Technology (UIT) for instructions on how to connect your CougarNet e-mail on a mobile device.

## **7. Honor Code and AI Generated Text**

The UHLC Honor Code applies to all aspects of this course. **You are responsible for knowing all Honor Code provisions and for complying with the Honor Code.** Please inquire if you have any questions regarding how the Honor Code's provisions apply to specific activities or situations related to this course. Your continuing enrollment in this course is deemed to be a

pledge by you under the Honor Code to comply with the Honor Code in relation to this course and to comply with the instructions in the course syllabus.

The software technology known as artificial intelligence has recently expanded its capability to generate text (AI Generated Text). Examples of the technology include what are known as “generative” large language models (LLMs), and a specific implementation what is well known in the general public is ChatGPT. These systems can generate text in response to prompts and/or input of other text/documents/code/images. The output, the AI Generated Text, appears to have human-mimicking “intelligence” and is thus potentially usable as a substitute for written material one might generate themselves. AI Generated Text can include computer code or programs as well as human language content.

Your continuing enrollment in this course obligates you to not knowingly prompt, generate, or use any AI Generated Text in relation to any activity or assessment in this course. This applies to AI Generated Text from yourself or others. This obligation includes that your assessment materials in the course is without any contribution from AI Generated Text. This obligation specifically extends to not plagiarize any writing required of you for assessment in the course: AI Generated Text will be treated as from another/others in applying the plagiarism policy to this course. The term “assessment” means any material generated for this course that is submitted to the instructor or presented in a class session, regardless of whether it is graded content or not. Assessments include mid-terms and final exams. AI Generated Text may not be used in the development or drafting of any assessments created by you in a non-proctored environment, such as a “take-home” final examination.

Exceptions:

- You may use Generative AI for exercises related to Generative AI when specifically permitted.
- You may use Generative AI as a study aid to help you understand material better. For example, you can ask generative AI to create additional examples of mandatory v. persuasive authority or to assist in your outline for the class. This does not include creating any material that will be submitted as an assessment in the course.

**8. Legal Writing Center**

An excellent resource for free individual tutoring is the Legal Writing Center. The Center is staffed with outstanding second- and third-year law students who can help you with legal writing, legal research, citation, and style and usage. Note, however, that the writing fellows are prohibited from assisting you with certain graded assignments before you submit them. You can schedule an appointment with a writing fellow by emailing [C\\_LawLegalWritingCenter@central.uh.edu](mailto:C_LawLegalWritingCenter@central.uh.edu) or by calling 713-743-0759.

## **9. Reasonable Academic Adjustments/Auxiliary Aids**

The University of Houston is committed to providing an academic environment and educational programs that are accessible for its students. Any student with a disability who is experiencing barriers to learning, assessment or participation is encouraged to contact the Justin Dart, Jr. Student Accessibility Center (Dart Center) to learn more about academic accommodations and support that may be available to them. Students seeking academic accommodations will need to register with the Dart Center as soon as possible to ensure timely implementation of approved accommodations. Please contact the Dart Center by visiting the website: <https://uh.edu/accessibility/> calling (713) 743-5400, or emailing [jdcenter@Central.UH.EDU](mailto:jdcenter@Central.UH.EDU).

## **10. Recording of Class**

Students may not record all or part of class, livestream all or part of class, or make/distribute screen captures, without advanced written consent of the instructor. If you have or think you may have a disability such that you need to record class-related activities, please contact the Justin Dart, Jr. Student Accessibility Center. If you have an accommodation to record class-related activities, those recordings may not be shared with any other student, whether in this course or not, or with any other person or on any other platform. Classes may be recorded by the instructor. Students may use instructor's recordings for their own studying and notetaking. Instructor's recordings are not authorized to be shared with anyone without the prior written approval of the instructor. Failure to comply with requirements regarding recordings will result in a disciplinary referral to the Dean of Students Office and may result in disciplinary action.

## **11. Mental Health and Wellness**

The University of Houston has a number of resources to support students' mental health and overall wellness, including CoogsCARE and the UH Go App. UH Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offers 24/7 mental health support for all students, addressing various concerns like stress, college adjustment and sadness. CAPS provides individual and couples counseling, group therapy, workshops and connections to other support services on and off-campus. For assistance visit [uh.edu/caps](http://uh.edu/caps), call 713-743-5454, or visit a Let's Talk location in-person or virtually. Let's Talk are daily, informal confidential consultations with CAPS therapists where no appointment or paperwork is needed.

The Student Health Center offers a Psychiatry Clinic for enrolled UH students. Call 713-743-5149 during clinic hours, Monday through Friday 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. to schedule an appointment.

The A.D. Bruce Religion Center offers spiritual support and a variety of programs centered on well-being.

Need Support Now? - If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call CAPS crisis support 24/7 at 713-743-5454, or the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: call or text 988, or chat [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org).

## **12. Title IX and Sexual Misconduct Policies**

Per the UHS Sexual Misconduct Policy, your instructor is a “responsible employee” for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and state law and must report incidents of sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual intimidation, intimate partner violence, or stalking) about which they become aware to the Title IX office. Please know there are places on campus where you can make a report in confidence. You can find more information about resources on the Title IX website at <https://uh.edu/equal-opportunity/title-ix-sexual-misconduct/resources/>.

## **13. Security Escorts and Cougar Ride**

UHPD continually works with the University community to make the campus a safe place to learn, work, and live. The security escort service is designed for the community members who have safety concerns and would like to have a Security Officer walk with them, for their safety, as they make their way across campus. Based on availability either a UHPD Security Officer or Police Officer will escort students, faculty, and staff to locations beginning and ending on campus. If you feel that you need a Security Officer to walk with you for your safety, please call 713-743-3333. Arrangements may be made for special needs.

Parking and Transportation Services also offers a late-night, on-demand shuttle service called “Cougar Ride” that provides rides to and from all on-campus shuttle stops, as well as the MD Anderson Library, Cougar Village/Moody Towers and the UH Technology Bridge. Rides can be requested through the UH Go app. Days and hours of operation can be found at <https://uh.edu/af-university-services/parking/cougar-ride/>.

## **14. Syllabus Changes**

I may need to make modifications to the course syllabus. Notice of such changes will be announced as quickly as possible in class and via email.